

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 9791

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY SESSION ENDS

REF: SEOUL 9287

SUMMARY: ON DEC. 18, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CLOSED UP SHOP FOR 1975
AFTER HAVING PASSED RECORD NUMBER OF BILLS AND MOTIONS. WHILE
ROKG HAS PRAISED ASSEMBLY SESSION FOR ITS PROGRESS AND LACK OF
CONFRONTATION, AND NDP PRESIDENT KIM YONG-SAM AND SUPPORTERS
ARE SATISFIED WITH MINOR NDP GAINS, SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS
APPEAR FRUSTRATED OVER THEIR OWN PERCEIVED POLITICAL
WEAKNESS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE 1975 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REGULAR SESSION ENDED DEC. 18.
DURING 88 DAYS A RECORD 136 BILLS AND MOTIONS WERE PASSED
IN A SESSION NOTABLE FOR ABSENCE OF GOVERNMENT-OPPOSITION
CONFRONTATION. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FORCED RESIGNATION OF
ASSEMBLYWOMAN KIM OK-SON IN OCTOBER, WHICH DELAYED PROCEEDING
FOR TWO WEEKS, RIVAL CAMPS REACHED ESSENTIAL AGREEMENT ON MAJOR
ISSUES. MAIN FOCUS OF ASSEMBLY WAS 2,036 BILLION WON 1976
BUDGET PASSED DECEMBER 2 (REFTEL). ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION VOTED
AGAINST BUDGET, THEY PARTICIPATED IN DEBATE AND CLAIM CREDIT
FOR SYMBOLIC BUDGET CUTS AND TAX LAW MODIFICATIONS.

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2. GOVT LIMITS FOR ASSEMBLY CONDUCT, WHICH WERE ILLUSTRATED

BY THE OUSTER OF KIM OK-SON, WERE RE-EMPHASIZED DEC. 18 BY PRESIDENT PARK DURING POST ASSEMBLY MEETING WITH ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT PARTY OFFICIALS. BLUE HOUSE SPOKESMAN KIM SONG-CHIN QUOTED PRESIDENT AS SAYING THAT WHILE DISCUSSION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION IS DESIRABLE HE WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY ASSEMBLY CHALLENGE TO OR DENIAL OF THE "PRESENT SYSTEM". PARK REPORTEDLY SAID THAT WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT NOW IS TO FIRMLY ESTABLISH THE YUSHIN SYSTEM.

3. DURING ANTICLIMACTIC FINAL FOUR DAYS OF PLENARY SESSION, DECEMBER 15-18, ASSEMBLY PASSED 109 BILLS WITH OPPOSITION VOTING IN FAVOR OF ALL BUT ONE. MOST SIGNIFICANT OF FINAL SPATE OF BILLS WAS PRICE STABILIZATION AND FAIR TRADE BILL. THIS LAW ALLOWS GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE MAXIMUM PRICES FOR COMMODITIES, SET PUBLIC SERVICE RATES AND MONOPOLY PRICES, AND WITH CONSENT OF CABINET AND PRESIDENT, TO TAKE MEASURES FOR EMERGENCY SUPPLY OF COMMODITIES FOR PERIOD OF 5 MONTHS. (ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF LAW FOLLOWS SEPTEL).

4. NDP POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN YI CHUNG-CHAE HAS TOLD US THAT IN SPITE OF FEAR THAT MISUSE OF NEW LAW COULD HARMFULLY DISTORT MARKET FORCES IN ROK, NDP DECIDED TO VOTE FOR FINAL MODIFIED VERSION OF BILL AFTER GOVT. AGREED TO INCLUDE SOME SAFEGUARDS. THE ONLY OTHER BILL TO ATTRACT SIGNIFICANT ATTENTION WAS LAW REGULATION CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS TO PREVENT THEIR USE AS TAX SHELTER BY WEALTHY.

5. THE ASSEMBLY POSTPONED ACTION ON 67 ADDITIONAL BILLS AND MOTIONS INCLUDING NDP RESOLUTION FOR MASS CABINET RESIGNATION FOR ECONOMIC AND FOREIGN POLICY "FAILURES." NDP ASSEMBLYMAN HAS TOLD US THAT GOVERNMENT POLITICIANS SECRETLY REQUESTED OPPOSITION TO MOVE FOR RESIGNATIONS OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS AS PART OF GOVERNMENT INFIGHTING, BUT NDP DECIDED TO ASK FOR MASS RESIGNATION WITH KNOWLEDGE THAT MOVE WOULD BE AT MOST SYMBOLIC GESTURE. (SUDDEN GOVT. ANNOUNCEMENT DECEMBER 19 OF CABINET CHANGES REPORTED SEPTEL.)

6. PRESS HAS COMMENTED ON UNUSUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION. MOOD AT RECEPTION MARKING END OF FIRST SESSION IN NEW ASSEMBLY BUILDING WAS RELAXED AND CORDIAL.
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SEVERAL NDP ASSEMBLYMEN TOLD AMBASSADOR AT RECEPTION THAT THEY WERE RELATIVELY PLEASED WITH RESULTS OF SESSION. DRP AND YUCHONGHOE SPOKESMEN HAVE VOICED PLEASURE AT "UNPRECEDENTED" CALM, SINCERE DISCUSSION AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OF OPPOSITION AND INDICATED HOPE THAT THIS IS START OF NEW ASSEMBLY TRADITION.

7. IN CONTRAST TO GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS NDP SPOKESMAN HAN

PYONG-CHAE APPOLOGIZED TO PEOPLE FOR OPPOSITION FAILURE TO CHECK UNILATERAL ACTIONS OF GOVERNMENT. HAN SAID THAT IT WAS "HEART-BREAKING" FOR ASSEMBLYWOMAN KIM OK-SON TO HAVE BEEN FORCED OUT OF ASSEMBLY IN VIOLATION RIGHT OF IMMUNITY. PRIVATELY, OPPOSITION REACTIONS RANGE FROM THOSE OF KIM YONG-SAM AND OTHER MODERATES WHO ASSERT THAT NDP HAS MADE SOME GAINS DESPITE DIFFICULT SITUATION TO THOSE OF KIM TAE-CHUNG, HARD-LINE VICE SECRETARY GENERAL CHOE HYONG-U AND KIM OK-SON WHO ARE BITTER AT IMPOTENCE OF OPPOSITION.

8. WITH END OF SESSION POLITICIANS ARE BEGINNING USUAL TOURS OF FRONT LINES, PREPARING FOR HOLIDAYS AND PLANNING FOREIGN JUNKETS; MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS EXPECT PERIOD OF RELATIVE QUIET UNTIL LATE JANUARY WHEN PACE SHOULD PICK UP IN ANTICIPATION MARCH YUCHONGHOE RE-APPOINTMENTS AND SPEAKERSHIP APPOINTMENT, MAY NDP CONVENTION AND POSSIBLE SEPTEMBER DRP CONVENTION.

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